

Message Text

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AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

S E C R E T LISBON 0359

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, PO

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF LABOR OUTLINES ANTI-INTERSINDICAL STRATEGY

REFS: (A) LISBON 0251 (DTG 140653Z JAN 76), (B) 75 LISBON

7410 (DTG 121510Z DEC 75) (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: MINISTER OF LABOR TOMAS ROSA DISCUSSED HIS DUAL
STRATEGY FOR ENDING COMMUNIST STRENGTH IN LABOR AND DESCRIBED

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SOME OF HIS RECENT ACTIONS TO KEEP THE PCP OFF BALANCE. END

SUMMARY.

1. MINISTER OF LABOR TOMAS ROSA MET WITH LABATT JAN 15.
FOLLOWING SUMMARIZES MAJOR POINTS OF CONVERSATION.

2. LABOR AGITATION: THE MINISTER WAS CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC REGARDING THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO RESIST COMMUNIST (PCP) FOMENTED LABOR AGITATION. HE BELIEVES HIS RECENT MOVES HAVE THROWN INTER-SINDICAL OFF BALANCE AND ARE THE REASON WHY HE IS INCREASINGLY THE TARGET OF PCP ACCUSATIONS. ROSA ASSERTED THAT WHILE THE PCP DOES NOT HAVE LARGE NUMBERS OF HARD-CORE SUPPORTERS IN LABOR, IT MANEUVERS ITS ADHERENTS WELL TO CREATE THAT IMPRESSION.

3. LABOR LAW REVISION: ROSA STATED THAT THE COUNCIL OF MINS LAST WEEK DISCUSSED HIS PROPOSAL TO REVISE THE LABOR LAW. THE OBJECT OF THIS REVISION WOULD BE TO REMOVE LEGAL RECOGNITION FROM INTERSINDICAL, THUS DEINSTITUTIONALIZING IT AS PORTUGAL'S SOLE LABOR CONFEDERATION. ALTHOUGH STILL IN THE PLANNING STAGE, ROSA SAID THE REVISED LAW WOULD ALSO REQUIRE NEW UNION ELECTIONS NATIONWIDE. THESE, BASED ON A MORE ACCURATE CONTROL OF THE UNIONS' VOTING ROLLS, WOULD END PCP DOMINATION OF INTERSINDICAL. HE HOPED THAT THE REVISED LAW WOULD BE PUBLISHED IN TIME SO THAT THE NEW UNION ELECTIONS COULD BE HELD BEGINNING IN APRIL. UNION ELECTIONS DURING THIS PERIOD WOULD HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF RIDING ON THE POPULAR INTEREST IN THE PRESIDENTIAL AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS WHICH WILL BE HELD THEN.

4. LABOR TRAINING: LABATT MENTIONED THE POSSIBILITY OF TRAINING IN VARIOUS LABOR ORIENTED PROGRAMS UNDER AID AUSPICES. THE MINISTER RESPONDED WITH INTEREST AND STATED THAT HE WAS PRESENTLY WORKING ON AN OVERALL PROGRAM DOCUMENT FOR THE MINISTRY FOR 1976. THIS INCLUDES THE INCREASED DECENTRALIZATION OF THE MINISTRY'S ACTIVITIES AND ITS SPECIALIZED TRAINING NEEDS. HE STATED THAT THE MINISTRY SHOULD BE IN A POSITION BY EARLY FEBRUARY TO REQUEST SPECIFIC TRAINING PROGRAMS. HE COMMENTED THAT DUE TO SENSITIVE POLITICAL CONDITIONS, IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF THESE PROGRAMS COULD INCLUDE SOME THIRD-COUNTRY PORTION IN ORDER TO GIVE THEM A MORE "INTERNATIONAL" ASPECT AND LESSEN THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE TRAINEES WOULD BE TAGGED AS US LACKEYS UPON THEIR RETURN. FOR THE SAME REASON, ROSA

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THOUGHT IT STILL INOPPORTUNE TO CONSIDER TRAINING PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES FOR LABOR LEADERS.

5. TACTICAL ACTIONS AGAINST INTERSINDICAL: ROSA DID NOT EXPECT THAT HIS MOVE TO REMOVE THE PCP LEADERSHIP OF THE CHEMICAL WORKERS UNION BY IMPUGNING THEIR ELECTION THROUGH COURT ACTION WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL (REF A). HE SAID THIS RATHER WAS AN EFFORT TO CALL THE LEADERSHIP'S

LEGITIMACY INTO QUESTION AND FOLLOWED FROM HIS PHILOSOPHY THAT THE BEST DEFENSE IS A GOOD OFFENSE. AS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THESE TACTICS HE CITED A PRESS RELEASE HE HAD JUST APPROVED. THIS RELEASE STATED THAT OFFICIAL INVESTIGATIONS WERE CONTINUING REGARDING A TELEX MESSAGE SENT BY INTERSINDICAL TO ITS AFFILIATED FEDERATION IN COIMBRA ON NOV 25, DURING THE ABORTIVE LEFTIST COUP. THIS MESSAGE CALLED UPON THE UNIONS TO "GO TO PROGRESSIVE MILITARY UNITS, TO COMMUNICATIONS CENTERS (RADIO, TELEVISION, AND REGIONAL TRANSMITTERS), TO POWER STATIONS AND WATER SUPPLIES" WITH SLOGANS OPPOSING THE "RIGHTIST MILITARY COMMAND" IN LISBON AND IN SUPPORT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY SOLDIERS. ROSA SAID THAT CITING THIS EVENT JUST PRIOR TO THE PLENARY MEETING WHICH INTERSINDICAL IS HOLDING IN COIMBRA JAN 16-17 WAS TO REMIND THE PARTICIPANTS OF INTERSINDICAL'S ORIENTATION AND RECENT ACTIONS.

6. COMMENT: IT IS POSSIBLE THAT ROSA IS UNDERESTIMATING THE ABILITY OF THE PCP TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF WORKER DISCONTENT OVER RISING PRICES, THE FREEZING OF CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS, AND UNEMPLOYMENT. THE DEGREE OF POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE PCP-BACKED RALLY IN LISBON JAN 17 SHOULD BE INDICATIVE.

7. IT IS ALSO LIKELY THAT ROSA'S PLANS TO ISSUE A REVISED LABOR LAW WILL BE DELAYED, AND POSSIBLY MODIFIED OR REJECTED BY THE GOVERNMENT. SUCH A PROPOSAL PRIOR TO THE ELECTIONS WOULD BE INTERPRETED AS A DIRECT CHALLENGE BY THE SIXTH GOVERNMENT TO THE PCP AND WOULD BE AN ISSUE ON WHICH THE COMMUNISTS COULD MOBILIZE SOME POPULAR SUPPORT.

8. ROSA IS STILL ADVOCATING A DUAL STRATEGY FOR ENDING COMMUNIST HEGEMONY IN LABOR. ON ONE HAND HE IS WORKING TO REMOVE LEGAL RECOGNITION OF INTERSINDICAL, THUS LEAVING OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF FORMING AN ALTERNATIVE CONFEDERATION.

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ON THE OTHER HAND HE IS DISCUSSING METHODS OF CAPTURING CONTROL OF INTERSINDICAL FROM WITHIN. WHICH OF THESE TWO OPTIONS IS THE MOST PROMISING IS UNCERTAIN AND HE IS KEEPING BOTH OPTIONS OPEN.

9. THE SOCIALIST LEADERSHIP OF THE SOUTHERN BANK WORKERS UNION, WHICH INCLUDES THE LISBON AREA, IS RECOMMENDING THAT THE BANK WORKERS REMAIN AFFILIATED WITH INTERSINDICAL IN ORDER TO OPPOSE ITS PCP LEADERSHIP FROM WITHIN. THE BANK WORKERS ARE TO VOTE ON THE ISSUE JAN 16. THE OUTCOME OF THIS ELECTION IN THIS INFLUENTIAL UNION WILL DO MUCH TO DETERMINE THE RELATIVE VIABILITY OF THE TWO ALTERNATIVES. CARLUCCI

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